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a mysterious transaction in which Christ assumes, in an expiatory way, the full responsibility for his sins.

He may think at first [this "amiable and aspiring youth" who "is trying to imitate Jesus"] that he can identify himself with the Son of God at any point over the whole area of his life, but he discovers experimentally that this is not so. He finds out in a way surer than any logical demonstration that Christ is in the last resort as inaccessible to him as the God to whom he would draw near by imitating Christ, and that the only hope he has of getting to God in this way depends upon Christ's making Himself one with him in that responsibility for sin which separates him from the Father. His one point of contact with Christ, when his whole situation is seriously taken, is Christ's character as a propitiation for sin. (Pp. 300 f.)

The meaning of the author's main contention is fairly plain to one who is familiar with theological literature and modes of thought; but to the reader not thus prepared it must be obscure. Yet, like many others who have written on this theme, Dr. Denney is curiously elusive and unsatisfactory to the trained mind. He is not evasive so much as he is unable to state exactly what is accomplished by Christ in his substitutionary death. He says, it is true, that Christ takes the full responsibility of the sinner's sin. But what does this mean? How can moral responsibility be shifted from the guilty to the guiltless without destroying morality itself? The whole argument is only another statement of the old device for morally getting something for nothing, for acquiring righteousness without meeting the requirements which are absolutely essential to righteousness. It drags us again to the demoralizing conclusion that God achieves morality in man by a process which is immoral and fundamentally impossible outside the sophistries of theology.

The second book adds nothing of importance to the first. In a somewhat more polemical vein the author presents a preliminary definition of the subject, and then discusses "Sin and the Divine Reaction against It" and "Christ and Man in the Atonement."

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A PHILOSOPHY.

TO THOSE who knew Herbert Spencer only through that great system of philosophy which he has given to the world this account of his life and personality¹ will be a welcome acquisition, especially as it is written by

¹ *An Autobiography*. In two volumes; illustrated. New York: Appleton & Co., 1904. 655 and 603 pages.

his own hand and published by those who for so many years have stood in honorable business relations with the distinguished thinker.

Physically, Mr. Spencer's life was one long losing battle with nervous disease, and the last dozen years of it were spent in retirement and invalidism. Intellectually, he was strikingly independent and constructive in his thinking; fitted, by heredity and early training, for accurate observation and wide generalizing. Morally, he inherited from his Huguenot and Wesleyan ancestors a strong disposition to disregard all merely conventional or arbitrary authority—a disposition which he very happily describes by the phrase “constitutional nonconformity.” Religiously, he lived and died outside the pale of the “current orthodoxy,” because it never seemed possible to him that the Supreme Being should stand in that close personal relation to human life required by the creeds of the churches. Nevertheless, as life advanced, he regarded these creeds with increasing tolerance, and even with positive approval, as necessary and salutary factors in man's evolution toward the highest religious status. He even declares that the sphere occupied by them “can never be an unfilled sphere.”

It must be admitted that Mr. Spencer carries his “constitutional nonconformity” to such length at times that he almost seems to disagree for the pure love of disagreement. He has no patience with Plato, whose *Dialogues* seem to him indefinite in thought, and dramatically inferior to the conversations of our third-rate novelists. To read the *Iliad* through would be “a dreadful task.” Ruskin speaks and writes “multitudinous absurdities.” Turner is not a great painter, nor is Wagner a great musician. As for Carlyle, he “either could not or would not think coherently.” Carlyle, indeed, is a pet aversion, to whom Spencer devotes some five pages of denunciation, which for vigor and explicitness would do credit to the Chelsea sage himself.

It must also be admitted that Mr. Spencer sometimes criticises and condemns the position of an opponent without either fairly stating or carefully examining that position. For example, he refers to the “assumption, held in common by the Quakers and most other Christians, that the declared will of God is the only possible standard of morals.” Again, he charges ethical writers, as well as ordinary people, with teaching “without qualification” the doctrine that virtue always brings good consequences, and vice evil consequences. Students of philosophy have long been familiar with his criticism of Kant, and are perhaps not altogether unprepared for his confession, now made, that he never read more than the first few pages of the *Critique of the Pure Reason*. In his criticism of Kant he takes occasion to point out that reason's function, as a critic of external percep-

tion, is not to deny the genuineness of its dicta, but to "reinterpret them in such a way as to make them consistent." Having never read Kant, of course he could not be expected to know that this is precisely what the critical philosophy has done for our common notion of space.

In spite of the remarkable versatility of his genius, Mr. Spencer may be described as a man of one idea; and that idea is evolution. One of the most valuable features of this *Autobiography* is the manner in which it sets forth, "in the order of their genesis," the evolutionary ideas of which the author has been so distinguished an exponent. He calls the book a natural history of himself; and it is of the greatest interest to follow up the process of the unfolding of the fundamental ideas that constitute the basis and point of departure for his system, into all the ramifications of that system, as it was evolved during the author's active life; so that the "advance toward a complete conception of evolution" is shown to have been "itself a process of evolution."

In a series of twelve letters to the *Nonconformist*, published when Spencer was twenty-two years of age, there are adumbrations of the general drift of all his subsequent thinking. The omnipresence of law and order, in nature organic and inorganic, in man, in mind, and in society; the specific relation in which everything stands to its environment; the wants that have to be supplied, the instincts that have to be gratified, and the organs and instruments appropriate to this end; the decadence of unused organs and faculties; and the tendency everywhere toward equilibrium, toward self-adjustment, individual and social—all this is foreshadowed in the letters, and out of the letters grew *Social Statics*, Mr. Spencer's first book; while out of *Social Statics* grew the entire synthetic philosophy.

From the moment when it obtained possession of his mind, the conception of evolution absolutely dominated everything in Spencer's thought. The entire synthetic philosophy is an outgrowth of the root-principle of development by the operation of natural forces; and these forces are all at bottom only different forms of one single force, which "can in no case be either increased or decreased, but only transformed" (Vol. II, p. 15). All that has ever occurred, all that is now going on, and all that ever will be or take place in the universe, is to be explained in terms of the operation of that great force which is the one original, eternal, and opaque fact. All phenomena, whether astronomic, geologic, biologic, psychologic, or sociologic; all forms of being, of thought, and of will; all ideas, customs, and beliefs, of whatever sort; as well as all progress, all stagnation, and all decay, are to be explained in the same way, namely, as expressions of this one great force, which, in itself incomprehensible, takes

on the two forms of matter and motion, and by the constant distribution and redistribution of these, produces all the things that are, and all the events that happen, from the molecule to the Milky Way, from the motion of an insect's pinion to the swing of Neptune in his mighty orbit, and from the crudest superstitions of fetichism to the sublimest conceptions of the Christian faith.

To give even a summary of so imposing a system as the synthetic philosophy is scarcely possible within the present limits; and, fortunately, it is scarcely necessary. The manner in which the author employs the conception of an original and inscrutable force, unceasingly expressing itself in a distribution of matter and motion, to account for all phenomena in the inorganic, organic, and superorganic realms; the conceptions of the instability of the homogeneous, and the unceasing concomitant processes of differentiation and integration, bringing about the transformation from "indefinite incoherent homogeneity to definite coherent heterogeneity;" the conception of equilibration as the final result of the transformations which an evolving aggregate undergoes; the conception of a perpetual alternation between evolution and dissolution—the alternations completing themselves in short periods in the case of small aggregates, while in large aggregates they may require periods immeasurable by human thought—that which persists throughout all these ceaseless changes, being an unknown and unknowable Power, which we are obliged to recognize as without limit in space and without beginning or end in time; all these conceptions are more or less familiar to the present generation. The system, it must be confessed, is fascinating on account of the stupendous breadth of its outlook and the simplicity at which it aims. The generalizing instinct is strong in our race; and every age has witnessed attempts to explain the entire universe by means of some single, all-inclusive principle; attempts to mount some Pisgah peak from which the whole land might be viewed. And we need not be surprised if the vast extent of the territory and the startling heterogeneity of the phenomena presented should sometimes give us pause, and raise doubts in many minds as to the feasibility of the attempts.

The system, it may be added, is attractive because of the many evidences that it contains a large measure of truth. That the processes of differentiation and integration, with the accompanying elimination of that which is worse adapted to the conditions in which it is placed, and the survival of that which is better adapted to those conditions, are going on continually, both in the material and in the mental realm, is a statement supported now by a vast and constantly accumulating weight of evidence. Whether by the same principle we shall be able to explain, not only the

development that takes place *within* each realm of the real, but also the relation in which the several realms (the biological, the psychological, and the ethical, for example) stand to one another, is another question. It is also quite another question, even granting that this can be done, and the whole stupendous structure articulated in detail, whether that would end the matter, and leave nothing more to be said.

Criticism of the synthetic philosophy might be general, as touching the cardinal principle underlying it; or it might be special, as touching the applicability of that principle to the various departments of investigation in detail. Following the former plan, we might ask whether the "instability of the homogeneous," which lies at the very root of the whole system, is not an impossibility in thought and in fact; we might ask how that which is perfectly homogeneous can ever *begin to depart from* that condition of homogeneity. Following the latter plan, we might point out that in the *First Principles*, the apparent conclusiveness of the arguments by which ultimate realities are shown to be unknowable, rests upon the assumption that the process of knowing a thing requires always the picturing of that thing in the imagination. Let any reader of the *First Principles* observe how constantly Mr. Spencer employs the terms "knowledge," "conception," "mental picture," and "image," as perfectly interchangeable; and then let him ask himself whether the entire argument is not a *petitio principii*. The question might legitimately be raised whether a treatment of man's moral nature which is avowedly nothing more than a natural history of the manner in which man is by slow degrees approaching a state in which he will spontaneously do the things which are conducive to the utterance of life, can be called ethics in the true sense. It may be seriously questioned whether the unique peculiarities of the moral judgment and the categorical imperative can be accounted for by saying that "experiences of utility, organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continuous transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition." It may be pointed out that no explanation is given as to *how* a "nervous modification" can *become* a "faculty of moral intuition," even though unlimited aeons be allowed for the transformation. We might, with Green, raise the question how a creature who is simply a product of natural forces could ever undertake to give an account of those forces, as explaining himself, or could ever consider himself under a moral obligation to conform to their laws. We might make the fullest allowance for Mr. Spencer's invaluable services to the science of education, and yet make serious objection to that doctrine

of moral discipline whose avowed object is to do the very thing that ought never to be done in the case, namely, to eliminate the personality of the parent and teacher, and substitute therefor "the impersonal agency of nature." We might call attention, as Mr. Frederick Harrison has done, to the inconsistency between that negative conception of the Supreme Being with which Mr. Spencer sets out, and that positive conception of him which he reaches before the conclusion of the *First Principles*; and we might ask whether his declaration that God is "at least personal" does not reopen the whole question as to the worth and validity of the current religious creeds.

But as all parts of the synthetic philosophy proceed from a single fundamental principle, so all criticisms of this system are at bottom one criticism. If Mr. Spencer's central thesis is complete and adequate in every respect, well and good; there is nothing more to be said. But if it is insufficient, its insufficiency will be shown in its failure to account for some of the undisputed facts.

Mr. Spencer, as he himself repeatedly asserts, has yielded himself without reserve to the notion of causality. The one great original inscrutable *force* is the sole and sufficient *ultimate* explanation of the universe. We believe that he has rendered great and distinguished service to science and philosophy by his thoroughgoing elaboration of the principle of cause; and we are not disposed seriously to quarrel with him, even when he undertakes to apply that principle in realms where others have hesitated to apply it. And yet it is certainly worth while to point out that the *exhaustive application of a principle* is not the same as an *exhaustive enumeration of principles*. To treat the world from the principle of causation is to treat it from a certain aspect or point of view. To show the validity of that principle in all the realms of the real is only to show that, *in that aspect*, or *from that point of view*, the universe is a manifestation of the constant and necessary relatedness of cause and effect. But, in so doing, the validity of other points of view is not precluded. Grant as fully as you please the omnipresence of force and law, and it still remains a perfectly legitimate conception that these are only the means by which, and the way in which, there is being continuously wrought out and realized that dominant *purpose* and *idea* which constitutes the higher fact and the sublimer reality of the universe.

Mr. Spencer describes himself as prone to yield himself without reserve to the tyranny of an idea which has once taken possession of his mind. He has certainly yielded himself to the tyranny of naturalism. So complete is the subjugation that he seems quite unable to conceive the existence

of any other viewpoint. If the world is throughout *caused*, then for him there can be nowhere any *purpose* in it. He assumes without inquiry the complete incompatibility of cause and purpose in the same universe; just as he assumes without inquiry the complete incompatibility of the subjectivity and objectivity of space and time, as constituents of the world we know.

Had he been a little less impatient with all idealism, and a little more disposed to give the matter patient consideration, he might perhaps have seen that space and time not only *may be*, but *must be*, both subjective and objective at the same time. And had he been a little less impatient with all theology, and a little more disposed to metaphysical thinking, he might have seen that cause and purpose, force and idea, are but two aspects of the same whole, and that neither can be spared from our thinking without an impoverishment of our universe.

And then perhaps, having seen this great truth, Mr. Spencer would have been disposed to reconsider an ethical doctrine which, as it stands, fails utterly to explain why man should ever conceive a higher or better state, and lay upon his own conscience the solemn obligation of striving to attain unto it. He would reconsider a sociology which, talking constantly of "progress," leaves that important word entirely devoid of those teleological implications which alone can give it intelligible significance. And he would reconsider a philosophy of religion which, in so far as it remains consistent with itself, removes God so far from the reach of man, and so denudes him of all knowable qualities, as to leave the religious nature (which Spencer declares to be as genuine as any other faculty of man's being) without any proper conceivable "environment"—that is to say, without any proper object upon which it may bestow itself in faith and love and service, and from which it may receive that sustenance without which, according to Spencer's own doctrine, it must fall into a condition of atrophy, and finally disappear.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

IN this volume,¹ Dr. Lyman Abbott, out of the riches of a lifelong personal acquaintance with Mr. Beecher, presents the public with an interpretation, an "appreciation," and a defense of his great master and friend.

Such a volume is perhaps specially needed just at this time. Mr.

¹ *Henry Ward Beecher*. By LYMAN ABBOTT. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1903. xl+458 pages. \$1.75, net.